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**Senator George S. LeMieux**  
Chairman of the Board of Trustees

**Dominic M. Calabro**  
President & Chief Executive Officer

**Comments to the Honorable Ed Hooper, Chair, and members of the  
Senate Committee on Commerce and Tourism regarding SB 800 - Economic Development**

My name is Dominic M. Calabro and I am President and CEO of Florida TaxWatch, an independent, nonpartisan, nonprofit, taxpayer research institute & government watchdog which, for over 40 years, has worked hard to improve the effectiveness, efficiency, and accountability of Florida government and promote a fair and equitable system of taxation.

Since its sunset on June 30, 2020, Florida TaxWatch has been recommending the reestablishment of the Qualified Target Industry Tax Refund Program (QTI). Although SB 800 does not fully revive QTI, the program it creates--the Rural Opportunity Tax Refund Program--is based on it, incentivizing the creation of high-quality, high-wage jobs. **This is a proven model that has performed well in Florida.** It is a performance-based program that refunds some of the taxes a business has already paid, but only after it is verified that the contracted requirements have been met, including the promised increase in high-wage jobs. The program is only available to the most sought-after industries with the biggest economic benefit and only those that have not yet decided to locate or expand in Florida. Applicants must have the support—including a shared financial commitment— of the local community where the business is located. And most-importantly, **the program provides taxpayers with a significant return-on investment of more than 5 to 1—producing more than \$5 of additional state revenue for each dollar the state pays out in refunds.**

Businesses weigh many factors when deciding where to set up, relocate, or expand their shop. While Florida has a number of qualities that make the state attractive to businesses, **a well-designed economic incentive can tip the scale in Florida's favor.** QTI and the Rural Opportunity Tax Refund Program are such incentives.

**Florida TaxWatch research supports the provisions of SB 800** that promote the economic prospects of rural communities. However, **we recommend that the 2022 Legislature fully restore the QTI program, not limiting it to only rural areas.** For more information, see Florida TaxWatch's recent report ["2022 Legislature Should Reauthorize the Qualified Target Industry \(QTI\) Tax Refund Program."](#)

QTI is a proven incentive program that can play an important role in the state's growth, and it can have an even greater impact during our recovery from the pandemic. We look forward to working with you and your colleagues on this issue and are ready to discuss ways to strengthen Florida's economy.